

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:  
CASE NUMBER  
C 2021-003

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: State Ethics Commission  
ADDRESS: 201 Executive Center Drive  
Suite 150  
Columbia, SC 29210  
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (803) 253-4192

RESPONDENT: James R. Self  
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]  
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]  
TITLE: Candidate – Sumter County Council

Section 8-13-1308, S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires candidates to file Campaign Disclosures within ten (10) days of receiving or expending \$500; fifteen (15) days prior to each election; within ten (10) days of the end of each quarter; and a final report when the campaign account is closed. In addition, certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain the total of contributions accepted, the name and address of each person making a contribution, the total expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate or committee, and the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made from campaign funds. Pursuant to Section 8-13-1362 and Regulation 52-504 (C), the Pre-Election and quarterly report are required even when there have been no contributions or expenditures.

Records of the State Ethics Commission indicate that a Campaign Disclosure was due no later than January 10, 2017, April 10, 2017, July 10, 2017, October 10, 2017, January 10, 2018, April 10, 2018, July 10, 2018, October 10, 2018, January 10, 2019, April 10, 2019, July 10, 2019, October 10, 2019, January 10, 2020, April 10, 2020, July 10, 2020, and October 10, 2020. Respondent was sent an email reminder thirty days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirement by letters dated July 24, 2020 and August 21, 2020 as described in the attached. To date, no properly completed January 10, 2017, April 10, 2017, July 10, 2017, October 10, 2017, January 10, 2018, April 10, 2018, July 10, 2018, October 10, 2018, January 10, 2019, April 10, 2019, July 10, 2019, October 10, 2019, January 10, 2020, April 10, 2020, July 10, 2020, or October 10, 2020 Campaign Disclosure has been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B) and Section 8-13-1308 (F), S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended.

All investigations, inquiries, hearings, and accompanying documents must remain confidential unless respondent waives the right to confidentiality. If there is a finding of probable cause, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response (if any) by respondent, and the notice of hearing. If a hearing is to be held, the final order and all exhibits become public record. If no hearing is held following a finding of probable cause, the final disposition of the matter becomes public record. The willful release of confidential information is a misdemeanor, and any person releasing such confidential information, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or imprisoned not more than one year. Section 8-13-320(10)(g).

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF Richland

Personally appeared before me Meghan L. Walker who, first being duly sworn, says that she has read and knows the contents of the above complaint and that the allegations contained therein, are true and correct to the best of her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 8th day of January, 2021

[REDACTED]  
Meghan L Walker, Executive Director

[REDACTED]  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission expires 8-11-2025

SEC-7 (Revised 8/2019)

REPLY TO: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210 (803)253-4192  
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2021-003 )  
State Ethics Commission, )  
Complainant. )  
James R. Self, )  
Respondent. )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**DECISION AND ORDER**

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This matter came before the South Carolina Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on January 8, 2021. The Commission’s Executive Director reviewed the Complaint, determined it contained facts sufficient to warrant an investigation, and ordered an investigation. On March 18, 2021, the Commission reviewed the Complaint and investigative findings to determine whether probable cause existed to charge James R. Self (Respondent) with violations of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act). For the reasons stated herein, the Commission hereby finds probable cause exists, but waives further proceedings.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

Respondent was a candidate in a June 14, 2016 primary election for Sumter County Council. On May 10, 2016, Respondent filed a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) showing a balance of on-hand contributions. Respondent was defeated in the primary election and thereafter failed to file any additional CDRs. On July 24, 2020, the Commission notified Respondent via first-class mail of his failure to file sixteen (16) CDRs from October 2016 through July 2020. On August 21, 2020, the Commission notified Respondent of these failures via certified mail. Receiving no response, this complaint was filed on January 8, 2021.

During the Commission Investigation, a Commission Investigator telephoned Respondent.

Respondent informed the investigator that his campaign bank account was closed on October 17, 2016. The Investigator confirmed this with Respondent's bank. Respondent ultimately came into compliance on January 15, 2021, immediately following contact from the Commission Investigator.

### LAW

Pursuant to Section 8-13-320, the Commission is empowered to receive complaints and conduct investigations related to violations of the Ethics Act. Following the receipt of a Complaint and the completion of a corresponding investigation, the Commission must determine whether there is probable cause to believe a violation of the Ethics Act occurred. Section 8-13-320(10)(i). If the Commission determines probable cause exists, it may order a hearing on the merits or, if the Respondent has taken action to remedy or correct the alleged violation, it may waive further proceedings. Section 8-13-320(10)(i). The decision to waive further proceedings lies within the sound discretion of the Commission.

Section 8-13-1308(B) provides as follows:

Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8-13-1370.

Section 8-13-320(9)(b)(d) provides, in relevant part:

Action may not be taken on a complaint filed more than four years after the violation is alleged to have occurred unless a person, by fraud or other device, prevents discovery of the violation.

### DISCUSSION

Respondent's campaign account was closed on October 17, 2016. Therefore, Respondent's last required CDR was due January 10, 2017, two (2) days before the Commission's statute of

limitations began. See Section 8-13-320(9)(d). Respondent came into compliance immediately following his contact from a Commission Investigator on January 15, 2021.

**DECISION**

Based on evidence presented and the totality of the circumstances, the Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B). However, the Commission hereby waives further proceedings pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(j).

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 25 DAY OF March, 2021.

SOUTH CAROLINA ETHICS COMMISSION



CHILDS CANTEY THRASHER, CHAIR

Columbia, South Carolina